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Ministry of Agriculture
and Marine Fisheries



Agency of Partnership
for Progress
MCA – MOROCCO

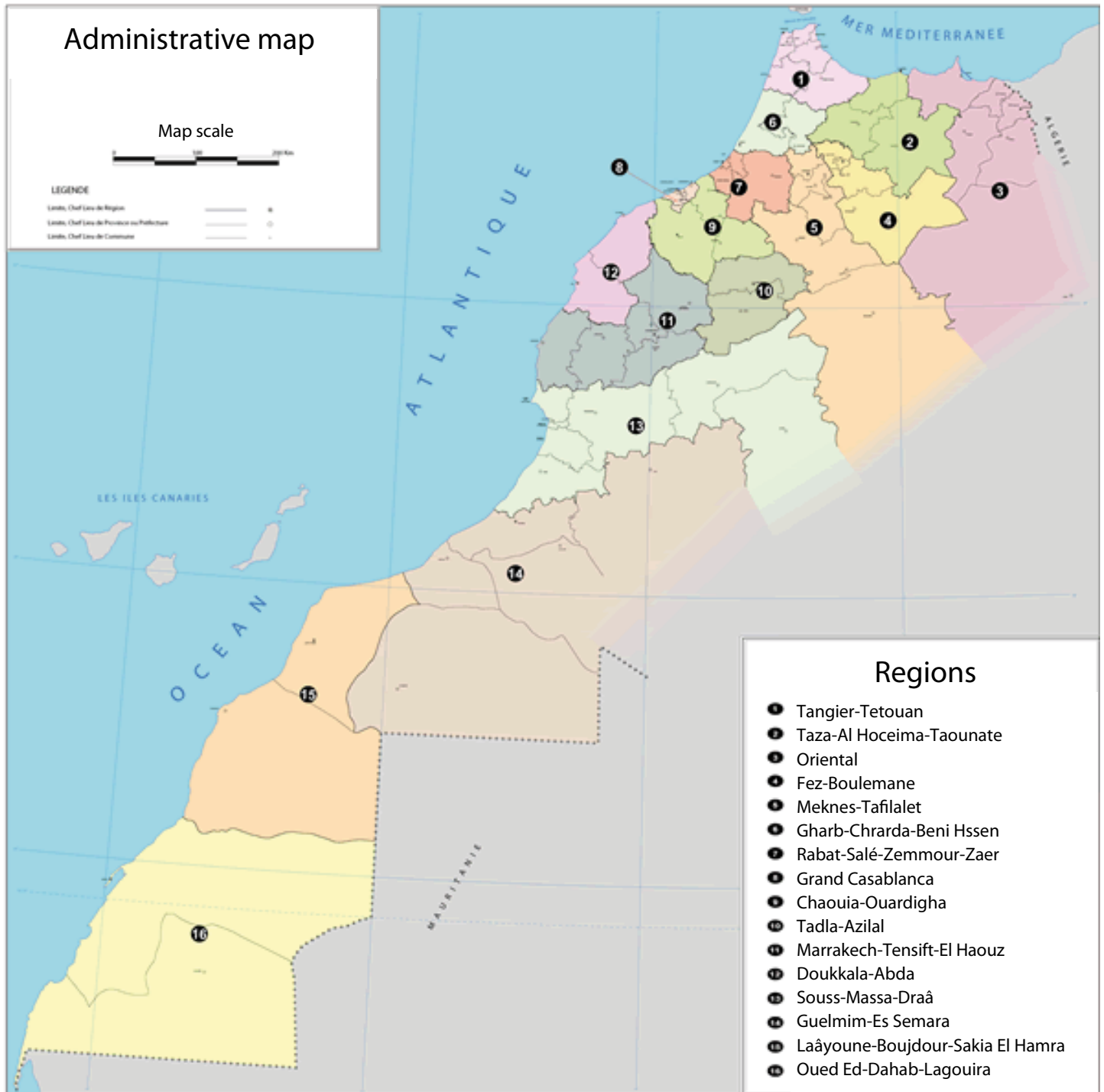
INVEST IN MOROCCO

DATE POST-HARVEST HANDLING AND PACKAGING ACTIVITIES



Improving Quality
and Marketability in the Date Sector

Regions of Morocco



Six Reasons to Invest in Date Post-harvesting and Packaging in Morocco

- >> I. Increasing date production to 160,000 ton (MT) by 2020 (p. 5)
- >> III. High domestic consumption, and even higher domestic demand for dates (p. 7)
- >> V. Generous government incentives for investment (p. 9, p. 12)
- >> IV. Strong government investment in the date sector (p. 8)
- >> II. Few competitors and low current packaging capacity (p. 6)
- >> VI. Competitive production costs (p. 14)

Business Opportunity Summary

Invest in date post-harvest handling and packaging activities to meet the increasing Moroccan demand for high-quality dates.

There is strong demand for high-quality dates in Morocco. Current consumption of dates is 120,000 MT, and total demand is estimated to be 160,000 MT. Total domestic production of dates is only 90,000 MT. However, there is a significant unmet market demand as well as low domestic supply of high-quality dates. Tunisian dates dominate the middle to high-end market for dates in Morocco, yet even these imports are still not meeting the full demand.

Moroccan date production is characterized by inconsistent quality and quantity, poor packing, with the majority of sales occurring in informal markets at low prices. The Agence du Partenariat pour le Progrès (APP) Fruit Tree Productivity Project, is addressing quality and quantity constraints through improving irrigation infrastructure, water management practices, production and post-harvesting practices, expanding date palm plantations, providing technical assistance in farmer cooperative development and capacity-building, and linkages to higher-end markets. The date sector covers 48,000 Ha of date palm plantations, encompassing 4.78 million palm trees. There are 12 date palm plantations included in the Fruit Tree Productivity project (about 15,000 Ha), located mainly in the Daraâ (2 plantations), Tafilalet (5 plantations), Figuig (1 plantation) and Tata (4 plantations) regions.

The objective of Morocco's Fruit Tree Productivity Project is to focus on fruit tree productivity in order to modernize the sector and unlock opportunities in the olive and date value chains. By 2013, the APP Project will foster the following improvements conducive to private investment:

Increased quality and quantity of date production. The Project aims to:

- Upgrade existing small-scale irrigation infrastructure in irrigated oasis perimeters (approximately 16,000 Ha).
- Plant approximately 280,000 , disease-resistant vitro plants and 60,000 selected off-shoot plants.
- Rehabilitate approximately 220,000 existing date trees (including pruning, cleaning and fertilizing).
- Organize, train and link smallholders to high value markets and provide access to financial services.

Improve date and olive value-chain support services. The Project aims to do this through:

- Developing national initiatives such as national training plans and scientific research support, certification programs for dates and olives, market research, and the establishment of a market information system for dates and olives.
- Providing assistance to date post-harvest activities such as processing, packaging and marketing. Assistance includes funding feasibility studies and technical assistance to enterprises.

Profitability indicators are positive for packaged high-quality dates, roughly 14,200 DH (\$1,775) per ton. Furthermore, the Government of Morocco has created a very business-friendly investment environment, providing investment incentives and supportive services to encourage investment (refer to p.8).

AGENCE DU PARTENARIAT POUR LE PROGRÈS (APP)

The Agency of Partnership for Progress (APP) is a Moroccan public institution, created to implement and execute the program of the "Millennium Challenge Compact" valued at \$697.5 million and signed on August 13, 2007 between the Government of Morocco and the Government of the United States of America. \$300.9 million of this program is dedicated to the Fruit Tree Productivity Project.

APP ensures the necessary coordination activities in order to highlight investment opportunities in the Fruit Tree Project, and contributes to the creation of favorable conditions for the realization of these opportunities.

Dates in Morocco

PRODUCTION

Dates are an important fruit crop in Morocco and throughout the world, currently ranking 4th in global tropical and subtropical fruit production, with a global production of 6 millions MT in 2007. In 2008, Morocco produced 90,000 MT of dates and exported 1,200 MT, with levels projected to reach 160,000 MT and 5,000 MT respectively by 2020, thanks to a broad range of initiatives, including those of APP, that will increase the number of productive date palm trees by 1.4 million over the next few years. There are three main date-producing regions in Morocco: Errachidia, Figuig, Ouarzazate/Zagora and Tata, accounting for over 90 percent of domestic production.

Morocco has a veritable cornucopia of date palm varieties, with 223 known varieties, and an estimated 1800 unnamed “khalt” or hybrid varieties. The best-known local, indigenous varieties are Boufeggous, Bouskri, Jihel, and Medjool, which all command strong prices year-round. The average retail price of 1kg of Mejhoul dates in Morocco is 120 DH (\$15), compared to many hybrid varieties that sell for less than 15 DH/kg (\$2).

Morocco continues to cope with the loss of nearly 12 million palm trees over the past century due to bayoud disease (from the Arabic word, “abiadh”, meaning “white,” referring to the whitening of diseased palm fronds). Bayoud was first reported in Zagora in 1870 and, by 1940, it was identified in most palm plantations throughout the country. There have been substantial government investments to develop Bayoud-resistant date varieties, with several significant successes, including the widespread propagation of the new variety, Nejda.

Resistant varieties originate from three sources: the selection of bayoud-resistant varieties from already existing cultivars; the selection of high-quality, resistant clones from the natural date palm population; and the creation of high-quality, bayoud-resistant varieties through hybridization programs.

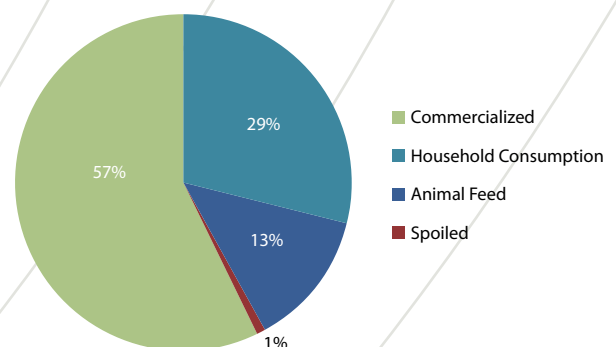
Inconsistent quantity and quality, in combination with low-grade packaging, provide considerable constraints for Moroccan date producers to meet unmet domestic and international demand. Through the development and rehabilitation initiatives implemented by APP, increased and improved production will increase domestic supply and allow the Moroccan industry to take advantage of growth opportunities.

There are more than 200,000 date producers in Morocco, consisting primarily of small-holder farmers, of which, approximately 10 percent are organized into cooperatives. There are several government-led initiatives aimed at increasing the coordination and market power of small-holder farmers. Recently four regional date associations were created, and an inter-professional association was created in April 2010.

Moroccan Date Production and Harvest Area: 2001-2008



Date Usage in Morocco



Post-harvest and Packaging

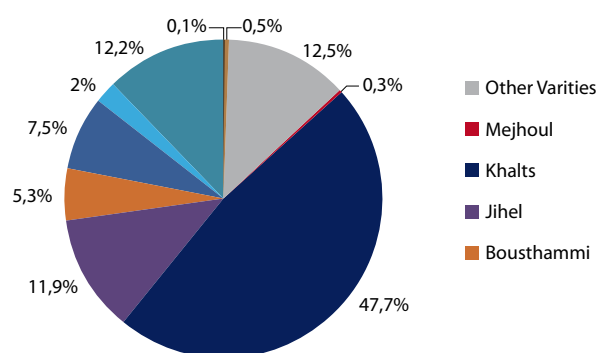
Throughout Morocco, there are fewer than 10 functioning date post-harvest and packaging facilities, spread throughout the four main date-producing regions, with another three under construction and five in the planning phase, with a combined capacity of less than 4,000 MT. As the domestic production of dates is 90,000 MT, of which 50 percent is commercialized, only about 10 percent of commercial dates are able to pass through post-harvest and packaging facilities.

Dates in Morocco are typically harvested completely ripe and require little or no post-harvest drying. To ensure a high quality product, dates are washed and heat-treated to kill any bacteria or insect eggs that could decrease their market value and shelf life. Dates used for jams, syrups, and/or pastes are also put through a pitting process which removes their seeds. Packing, especially in smaller boxes (250g -500g), preserves the quality of dates by reducing compaction, allowing retailers to sell smaller quantities at higher prices.

The vast majority (close to 90 percent) of Moroccan dates are sold in wooden boxes of 2 or 5 kg. These containers inherently decrease the value of the dates they hold, as the rough wood sides and bottom of the box easily damage delicate date skins, which increases the date's susceptibility to microbial growth and facilitates spoilage.

Cardboard cartons, on the other hand, are lightweight with smooth surfaces and come in sizes as small as ½ kg, which reduces compaction damage, allowing retailers to sell a higher quality product to consumers at a substantially higher price. There are very few manufacturers of these cartons, all based in Casablanca, and each order of a certain style (with a predetermined design) must be for at least 1000 cartons to be accepted by these companies. Packaging dates in attractive cardboard cartons increases their retail value by as much as 40 percent above the price of dates sold in wooden boxes.

**Date Variety Production in Morocco
(Percent of Total)**



Source: Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Fisheries

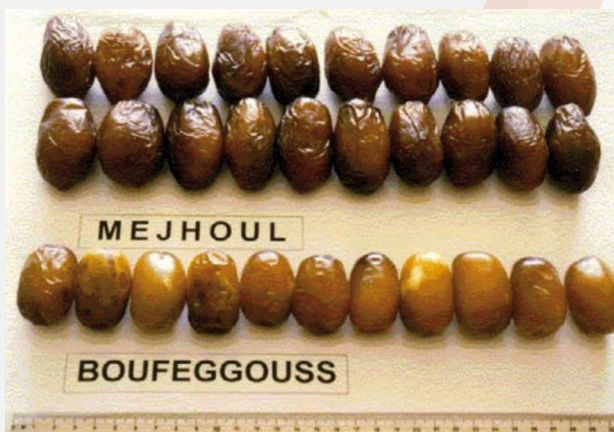
		Wholesale/ Producer Price (per KG)		Price in Wooden Box (per KG)		Price in Cardboard Carton (per KG)	
Quality	Variety	DH	\$	DH	\$	DH	\$
1rd	Mejhouli	50	6,3	80	10,0	120	15,0
	Boufeggous	15	1,9	20-25	2,5-3,1	35-50	4,4-6,3
	Bouskri	12	1,5	15	1,9	20-25	3,0
2rd	Aguellid	10	1,3	15	1,9	20	2,5
	Jihel	10	1,3	15-20	1,9-2,5	25	3,1
	Bourhar	10	1,3	15	1,9	20	2,5
3rd	Raslahmar	8	1,0	12	1,5	15	1,9
	Bouserdoun	6	0,8	8	1,0	12	1,5
	Bouserdoun	5	0,6	8	1,0	12	1,5
	Bousthammi	5	0,6	8	1,0	12	1,5
	Iklane	3	0,4	5	0,6	6	0,8
	Ahardane	3	0,4	5	0,6	6	0,8

Source: ORMVA/Ouarzazate

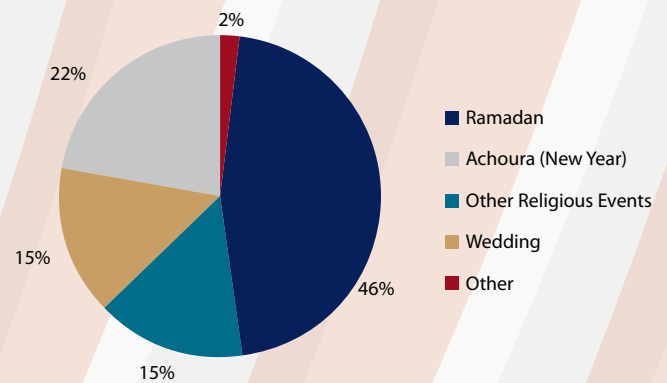
Domestic Consumption

Moroccans consume more than 120,000 MT of dates each year, with an expected increase to nearly 160,000 MT by 2020. The average domestic consumption is 2.82 kg/person, climbing upwards of 15 kg/person in some date-growing regions. Both domestically and abroad, the majority of date consumption takes place during certain holidays and festivals, including Ramadan and the Muslim New Year, with average consumption of 1-3kg/person and 0.5-1.5kg/person respectively.

Most Moroccans purchase dates from small, local grocery stores, ranging from 20-90 m2 in size. There are an estimated 45,000 of these stores throughout Morocco, with convenient proximity to the consumer being their strongest asset. While a number of large chains exist, there is a rapidly increasing demand for larger supermarkets throughout the country. The Moroccan-owned supermarket, Marjane, for example, opened its first store in the early 1990's and currently operates 21 outlets in 14 cities, serving over 19 million customers each year. Other major supermarket retailers include the Dutch-owned METRO (7 outlets), and the Moroccan-owned Aswak Assalam (8 outlets) and ACIMA (31 outlets). Aside from these retail outlets, there are over 400 large grocery stores, small supermarkets, and convenience stores in Morocco. These provide new and enhanced consumption opportunities with a projected increased demand for a higher quantity and quality of date.



Date Consumption in Morocco



Source: Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Fisheries

Unfortunately, the only variety of dates available year-round in Moroccan supermarkets is deglet noor, typically imported from Tunisia. Taste tests have shown that Moroccans strongly prefer locally grown date varieties, and are often willing to pay higher prices for them, but low domestic production and poor post-harvest handling and packaging only allows for Moroccan dates to be found in supermarkets shortly after harvest, and occasionally around Ramadan (if it falls close to the harvest period).

Studies suggest that many potential consumers are excluded from the market due to the high demand for dates at certain times of the year, which raises prices and decreases the availability of dates. When taking into account these consumers, the domestic demand for dates is estimated to be as high as 160,000 MT per year.

Trade and Investment Incentives

YOUR INVESTMENT SUPPORTED BY THE MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT

Agence du Partenariat pour le Progrès (MCA-Morocco)

The Agence du Partenariat pour le Progrès (MCA-Morocco), a Moroccan public institution, was established to manage the \$697.5 million Compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth through investments. Specifically, MCA-Morocco's , supported by a \$300.90 million allocation, has funded the rehabilitation of approximately 45,000 hectares of olive trees and the expansion of olive tree plantations to an additional 100,000 hectares in rain-fed areas.

It Fruit Tree Productivity Project will help promote medium-scale semi-modern, semi-industrial processing plants owned and operated by enterprises and associations of olive producers who are organized into processing-marketing "co-ops". It will fund a variety of critical value chain support services such as feasibility studies, business plan development, as well as training and scientific support, excluding the purchase of equipment.

For more information, visit MCA-Morocco's Website:

www.app.ma/en/index.php?page=fruit-tree-productivity

Plan Maroc Vert

The Plan Maroc Vert is the Moroccan Government's plan for 2008-2015 to improve productivity in the agriculture sector. It is expected to lead to the creation of one million agricultural enterprises through the implementation of 1,000 to 1,500 projects throughout the country. The impact on GDP is estimated at 70 to 100 billion DH (\$9 to \$12 billion) from the agricultural sector alone. The plan also aims to spark a new wave of domestic and international investments with a goal of 10 billion DH (\$1.25 billion) annually. The Plan Maroc Vert consists of two pillars :

Pillar I: Develop efficient agriculture that is able to adapt to market standards and attract private investment;

Pillar II: Fight poverty through increased revenue for small farmers. It focuses on three social projects:

1. Conversion: Replace farmers' cereal production with higher value-added products that are less susceptible to variations in rainfall, such as olives, almonds, and cacti ;

2. Diversification: Create additional income for farmers through diversification of value-added products ;

3. Intensification: Train farm operators in technical production skills that will dramatically improve productivity.

For more information about the Plan Maroc Vert, visit:

www.maroc.ma

Plan Emergence

The Plan Emergence is a targeted industrial growth strategy aimed at increasing economic growth, modernization, and competitiveness in the manufacturing and service sectors by 2015. Specific objectives include raising GDP growth by 1.6 percent per year above its already strong growth trajectory, creating 440,000 new jobs, and reducing the trade deficit by 50%.

For more information about Plan Emergence, visit :

www.maroc.ma

Maroc Export

Maroc Export is uniquely positioned to assist both foreign and domestic firms to reach international markets. It offers financing for exporters to attend promotional trade shows around the world, seminars and training workshops in international marketing strategy, and facilitate business to business partnerships between Moroccan producers and their counterparts overseas.

For more information about the services offered by Maroc Export, visit :

www.marocexport.ma

Located at the crossroads of the Mediterranean Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, Morocco is a prime geographic location for any investment. Trade agreements with the United States, the European Union, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and neighboring West African states gives Moroccan exporters access to over 1 billion consumers around the world.

TRANSPORT AND FREE ZONES

Morocco has over 3,000 km of Mediterranean and Atlantic coast lines which lends itself naturally to marine transportation. Casablanca is the world's largest man-made port, and handled more than 14.9 million tons of cargo in 2007. Casablanca also houses Morocco's largest airport, seeing more than 11 million passengers per year. Morocco has European-quality road and railway systems for the transport of both passengers and cargo between major cities and air and marine departure points.

Opened in 2008, Tanger-Med I port is set to be the largest port in the Mediterranean and in Africa by its completion in 2015. This project is supported by the establishment of two designated industrial free zones: Tanger Export Free Zone and the Tanger-Med Port Free Zone. Goods, including building equipment and machinery, entering or leaving Free Zones are exempt from all duties, taxes, and VATs on imports, distribution, consumption, production or export. Additionally, there are more than 20 industrial zones across the country that offer industrial land to domestic and foreign investors for substantially reduced prices.

For more information about economic and industrial zones, visit

www.invest.gov.ma

INVESTMENT INCENTIVES

The government of Morocco has established several investment incentives aimed at attracting foreign investment and promoting entrepreneurial spirit among its citizens. In addition to the incentives provided in the economic zones, all investors in Morocco enjoy:

- Zero taxes paid on patents and urban taxes during the first 5 years.
- No land registration fees.
- Complete exemption from import duties on equipment and materials necessary for project implementation for investment projects equal or above 200 million DH (\$25 million). This also includes VAT taxes for the first 36 months.
- Compete repatriation of profits to home country without fee.
- Countries investing more than US\$20 million are encouraged to negotiate their own investment package with the Moroccan Investment Development Agency.
- Subsidies (10%) for the construction and the equipping of units for cold storage of agricultural products.

Each region in Morocco coordinates and promotes domestic and foreign investment through their individual Regional Investment Centers (RICs), which are a "one-stop shop" for potential investors. Services provided include business registration, land negotiation assistance, and coordination with local governments and other interested parties. The opening of the RICs has enhanced the investment climate throughout the country and has made doing business in Morocco more streamlined. For instance, a new investor is officially registered with a business name within 48 hours of submission.

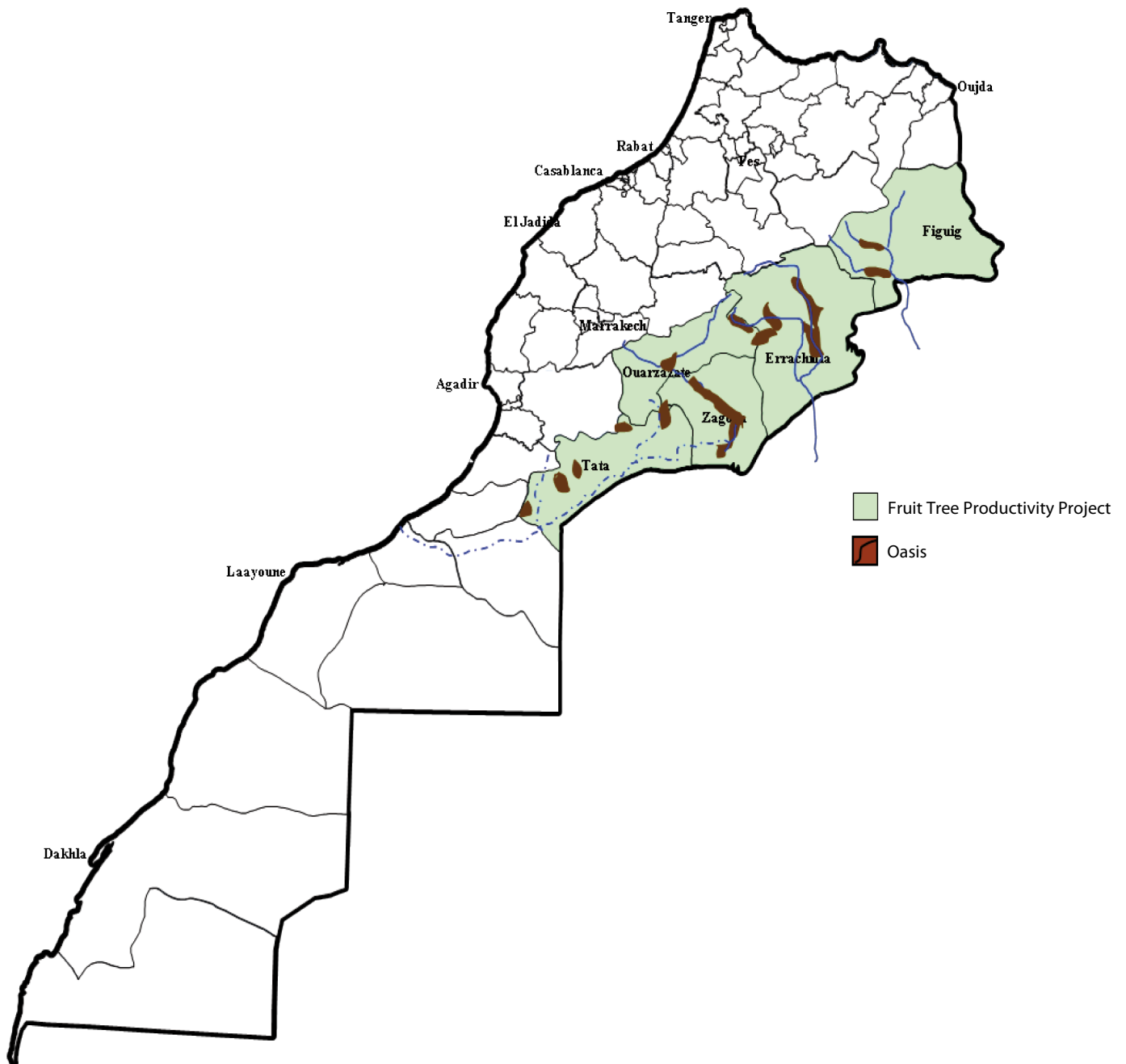
For more information about investment incentives, visit www.invest.gov.ma

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

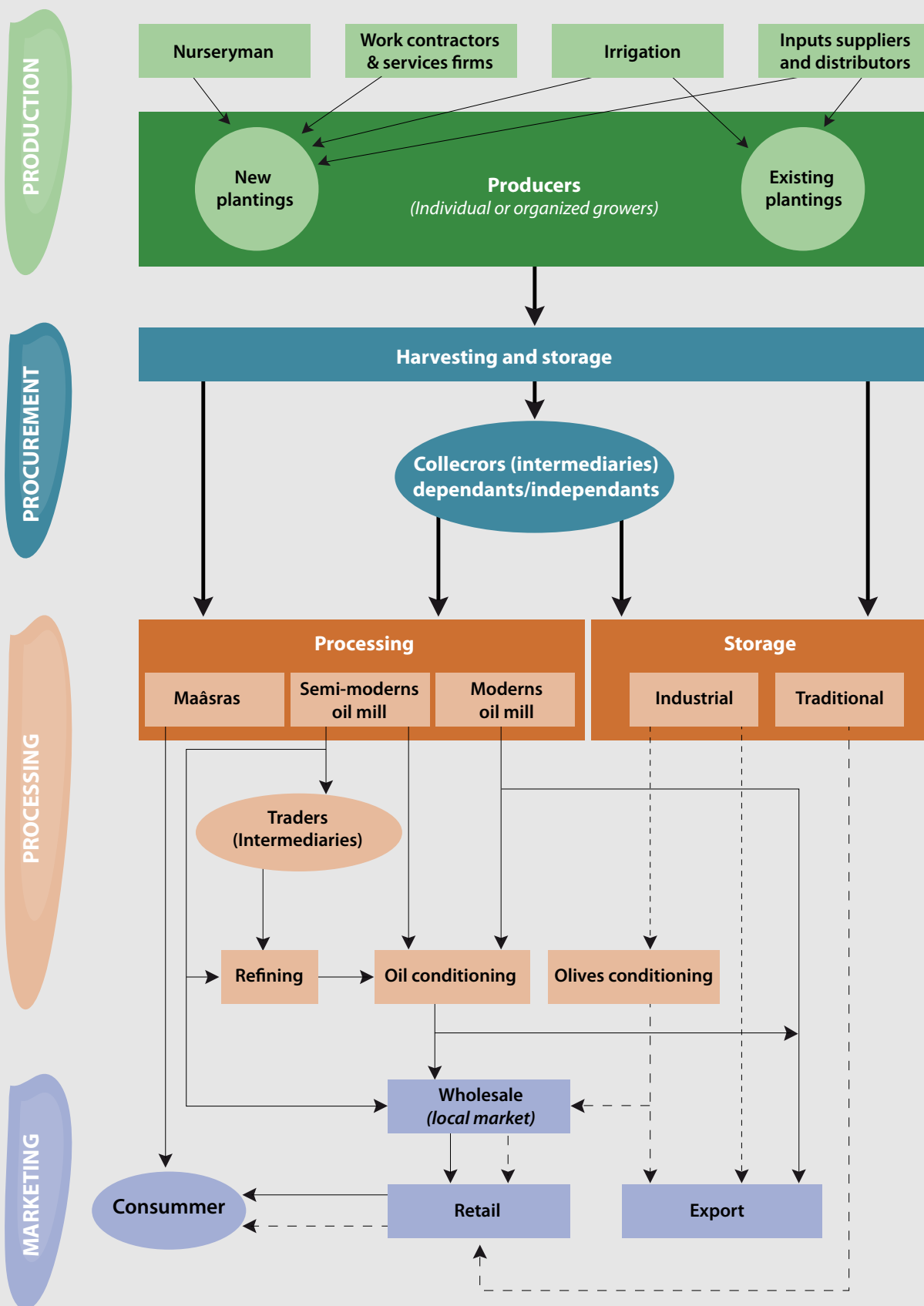
The Moroccan government is actively pursuing steps to improve the entrepreneurial activity of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) through three main programs: Foman-Hard, Imtiaz, and Moussanada,

- Foman-Hard is a long-running fund, providing businesses with loans of up to 40 percent of the investment cost, with a low interest rate of only 2 percent. 50 percent of the investment cost is through a bank loan (negotiated between the bank and the enterprise directly), and the remaining 10 percent of the investment cost is provided by the enterprise itself.
- Imtiaz is designed for companies at least two years old who wish to take advantage of financing for up to 20 percent of their investment, with a maximum of five million DH. The enterprise must provide 20 percent of the investment cost, with the remaining 60 percent coming from a bank loan (negotiated between the bank and the enterprise directly). Applications are reviewed 2-3 times per year, and financing is provided for up to 50 investment projects.
- Moussanada is designed to help SMEs in the process of modernizing and improving their competitiveness by providing funding for technical assistance consultants. The program subsidizes 60 percent of the total consulting costs, with the remaining 40 percent coming from the enterprise itself. About 500 technical consultants are funded each year through this program.

Main areas of Date production



DESCRIPTION OF OLIVE VALUE CHAINE



Government: Training and oversight - Research - Control / Incentives - Financing - Investment

Cost Structure Details

The typical capacities of date post-harvest and packing plants in Morocco are 50MT, 400MT or 1500MT, depending on the local supply and business interests of the owner. Below are the cost structures for each of these capacity facilities, with additional details provided for the 400MT capacity.

The total initial cost of investment for a 400 ton capacity facility is approximately 1,750,000 DH (\$218 750). This includes the cost of land, building construction, the purchase and import of necessary machinery, and a cold storage chamber.

Initial investment cost to build date post-harvest and packing plants with the capacity of 1500, 400, and 50 ton (MT)/year

Item	Cost (DH)	Cost (\$)	% of total cost			
Land Purchase	500	63	133333	16667	16667	2083
Buildings	1050000	131250	280	35	35	4
Misc. Materials	1000000	137500	293333	36667	36667	4583
VTT	350	44	93333	11667	11667	1458
Trucks and transportation	750	94	250	31	250	31
Cold Storage Units	1000000	125000	266667	33333	33333	4167
Crates	1000000	125000	266667	33333	33333	4167
Containers	600	75	160	20	20	3
Office Supplies	30	4	8	1	1	0
TOTAL	6380000	797500	1,751,333	218917	437667	54708

Source: Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Fisheries

Item	DH	\$	% of total cost
Personnel	275	34,4	0,77%
Packaging	684	85,5	1,90%
Utilities	108	13,5	0,30%
Depreciation	432	54,0	1,20%
Date purchases	34,4	4,300.0	95,86%
Total	35,899	4,487.4	100.00%

Source: All calculations are estimates based on interviews with a sample of participants in the Moroccan date value chain and

After the initial investment, it costs a 400 ton capacity plant approximately 35,900DH (\$4500) to produce 1 ton of packaged dates in Morocco. This assumes the plant's date sales will consist of 10 percent 1st quality, 47 percent 2nd quality, and 43 percent 3rd quality. A higher proportion of 1st or 2nd quality sales will increase revenues. The costs of packaging material here are for high-quality cardboard boxes.

Once the facility starts operating, the total cost to heat-treat and pack dates is calculated by adding the initial investment cost to the variable cost for each MT of dates treated, packaged, and sold.

If a 400MT capacity facility sells 123 MT of dates to the domestic market at an average selling price of 50,100 DH/MT (\$6,262.5/MT), it will breakeven, that is, its revenues will surpass the initial investment cost. At this point, the investor could make an estimated profit of 14,201 DH (\$1775) for each MT of dates sold. This analysis assumes the plant's date sales will consist of 10 percent 1st quality, 47 percent 2nd quality, and 43 percent 3rd quality dates. A higher proportion of 1st or 2nd quality sales will increase revenues.

Given the unpredictable supply of raw material, consumer preference, and market access, it is difficult to determine the exact timeframe in which the breakeven point will be reached.

In addition, the company can make extra revenues by providing cold storage services, technical consulting and rental space for retail. The estimation of this revenue for a 400 MT capacity plant is approximately 924,000DH per year. This assumes that half of the cold storage facility is rented out to other enterprises. The average rental fee is 0.25Dh/kilo

Breakeven point of the date post-harvest and packing plant with various capacities

	1500 MT		400 MT		50 MT	
Breakeven Analysis	DH	\$	DH	\$	DH	\$
Initial Investment Cost	6,380,000	797,500	1,751,333	218,916.6	437,667	54,708.4
Variable Costs (per ton)	35,899	4,487.4	35,899	4,487.4	35,899	4,487.4
Average Selling Price (per ton)	50,100	6,262.5	50,100	6,262.5	50,100	6,262.5
Production (ton) to reach breakeven point	449	56,1	123	15,4	31	3,9
Total Production Cost	22,507,573	2,813,446.6	6,178,411	772,301.4	1,544,015	193,001.9
Total Revenue	22,507,573	2,813,446.6	6,178,411	772,301.4	1,544,015	193,001.9
Profit (per ton) after breakeven point	14,201	1,775.1	14,201	1,775.1	14,201	1,775.1

Extra Revenue that the plant can make per year

	1500 MT		400 MT		50 MT	
Breakeven Analysis	DH	\$	DH	\$	DH	\$
Initial Investment Cost	6,380,000	797,500	1,751,333	218,916.6	437,667	54,708.4
Variable Costs (per ton)	35,899	4,487.4	35,899	4,487.4	35,899	4,487.4
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Total Revenue	22,507,573	2,813,446.6	6,178,411	772,301.4	1,544,015	193,001.9
Profit (per ton) after breakeven point	14,201	1,775.1	14,201	1,775.1	14,201	1,775.1

* FOB Price is the average FOB price from 2008-2009 export data obtained from EACCE

Source: Calculations are estimates based on data from Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Fisheries

Resources And Contacts

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